



News Release

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Magpie is Spokane County's first West Nile virus detection

OLYMPIA — Spokane County has its first-ever confirmed detection of West Nile virus, a magpie collected Sept. 2 in the West Plains area west of Spokane.

The mosquito-borne virus has been present in Washington since early this decade, but until now it hadn't been found in Spokane County. The Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory at Washington State University, Pullman, notified the Washington State Department of Health's Zoonotic Disease Program that the bird was infected with the virus.

One human West Nile case has been confirmed in Washington this year, a Klickitat County man in his 50s who is recovering. Several more human cases are awaiting the outcome of confirmatory testing. Washington recorded three human cases in 2008, its most ever.

While fall is nearly here, West Nile virus season is not over. In fact, the first few weeks of September are usually a peak time for this illness. People should continue to take steps to protect themselves. West Nile is spread by mosquitoes that have fed on infected birds, so avoiding mosquito bites is important. Try to stay inside at dusk and dawn, make sure windows and screens are tight, use mosquito repellents and, whenever possible, wear long sleeves and trousers.

Most of the state's West Nile detections this year have been east of the Cascade Mountains. Also this week, a Franklin County horse was found to have the virus, an adult quarter horse gelding that was euthanized. It's that county's first horse to test positive, although birds and mosquito pools from Franklin County have tested positive previously.

West Nile can cause serious illness such as encephalitis and meningitis. In rare cases, it can be fatal. Symptoms may range from fever, headache and body aches to muscle weakness, paralysis and coma. People whose symptoms continue should seek health care.

— More —

Try to eliminate mosquito habitat around the home. Remove standing water in containers such as buckets, old tires, wading pools and birdbaths where mosquitoes can lay eggs. Make sure gutters are cleaned out so they don't hold standing water. Also, fix leaky outdoor faucets and sprinklers.

Three birds from Western Washington have tested positive this year. All the other positive results have come from Central and Eastern Washington.

Dead birds may be [reported online](#) to state or local public health agencies. Information is on the state health agency's [West Nile virus](#) page.

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Visit the Washington Department of Health Web site at http://www.doh.wa.gov for a healthy dose of information.
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